

## [MacCurrie]

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1 Conn. 1938-9 MacCurrie

"The mill is workin' today," observes Mr. MacCurrie. "'twas an unheard of thing until times got slack, for the mill to work of an Easter Monday. On account of the Polacks. It's supposed to be a holiday for them. And they never showed up for work on that day, so the bosses over at the mill decided there was dom little use tryin' to keep the place goin'. Each mon has his job to do, and it raises hell if too many of them stay away.

"That's how it was when I worked there, at least. I should have stayed there, for I'd probably be workin' yet, or retired on a good pension. It's a goddom good place to work, the brass mill. There's young Mattoon, broke his arm and asn't any dom good for practical purposes for a couple of weeks. But he kept goin' to work and drawin' his pay just the same. How many places would they stand for that, now, and times the way they are?

"Yes, sometimes I wish I'd stayed there. Of course castin' is not the easiest job in the world, but I might have got on to somethin' else. They're very good about transferrin' you, and the like o' that.

"Did you know that old MacPherson worked in the mill? When first he came over from the old country he worked in the brick yard, and then he got a job in the mill. I can't bring to mind just what he was doin', but he worked over there for a while, the old deevil.

"If he'd stayed there he might have been president today, 2 because he was a goddom sharp mon, a mon that they'd have to take notice of, and a goddom hard worker. But he liked the outside work. He bought a couple of horses off the Thomases, and started haulin' and teamin' and the like of that, and then he bought that little piece over on Clay street and got into the coal business, and then he started contractin'. He made some of the first

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sidewalks in this town. That's one thing you can say for the old deevil, he did good work. There's not a crack nor a chip in those sidewalks today. He put the best o' sand into 'em, and that's the secret of a good sidewalk. I used to work for him, but I couldn't stand the old bahstard very long.

"He couldn't get along with anybody. Never satisfied unless he was houndin' and persecutin' somebody. He had a fight with the Thomases over something or other, and they'd never have any more to do with him afterward. He tried to buy land off them, and they wouldn't even sell him land. There was a mon used to live here by the name of Todd. Old Bob had to get him to go to the Thomases and buy that cow lot he owns up off Marine street. They sold it to Todd, but they didn't know he was buyin' it for old MacPherson.

"He had a fight with Barney Lynch, the blacksmith. He built that little shop on Clay street for Barny, and Barney took a lease on it. Bob went in there one day and saw a great bunch of horseshoes hangin' over the door and he accused Barney of tryin' to break doon the buildin' on him. He went to Roberts the lawyer about it. But Barney was just as stubborn as old MacPherson. He took all the goddom horseshoes doon 3 and weighed them and put them back, and he said he could prove the weight wasn't heavy enough to break doon the wall.

"'twasn't long after he was buildin' that well for Woodruff up on the side hill where the windmill is, and after work one night one of the lads was goin' home and Barney called him into the blacksmith shop for to help him on a bit of work. The next day the lad came to work and old MacPherson fired him. 'You better go doon and work for your friend Barney,' he says.

"Well, I'll tell you the kind of an old bahstard he was. When George Gray worked for him one day he come doon to the yards and George was sufferin' with a toothache. 'What's the matter, George,?' says the old mon. George told him. 'don't pay any attention to it,' says the old mon, 'it'll go away.' Well, it wasn't long after, one of the boys come doon

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one day and says to George, 'the old mon is up to the house with one o' mither's shawls wrapped around his jaw, and he hollerin' to beat all hell.' So George thinks he'll get even, and he goes up to the house and looks in on the old mon. 'What's wrong, Bob?! he says. 'toothache,' says Bob. 'don't mind it,' says George, 'it'll go away. That's what you told me.' 'mon,mon,' says Bob, 'it's a different kind of a toothache from what you had.'

"George couldn't stay with him. He was drivin' a pair of the old mon's horses on Panic hill one day, and some way or other the harness broke and the wagon rolled into a ditch. When he came back and told the old mon, Bob says, 'Jesus Christ, you'd break the bank of England! Just for that, you can go down to Howe's mill and bring back a load.' And it was six o' 4 clock at night then. George went right doon to Austin's and got a job and came back and told the old mon. He was madder than hell, MacPherson was. He fixed it up with Austin so that he wouldn't take George for a couple of weeks, and persuaded him to stay. He thought George would change his mind in the meantime and stay with him, but George didn't. I've had enough of the old bahstard, 'George said.

"I remember one time when I was workin' for him. We were puttin' in sidewalk for Doctor Goodwin doon in his court. And Mrs. Goodwin, she didn't think it was bein' done just right and oot she come to put in her two cents worth. 'Pick up your tools, boys,' says old MacPherson. 'mrs. Goodwin can do this job better nor I can.'

"Nobody could tell him anything, you see. He'd do it in his own way, or he wouldn't do it at all. Stubborn. He's like a goddom old mule. Never happy unless he's houndin' somebody.

"He's goin' on eighty five years old and he's a dom sight meaner now than he was when I first knew him. I knew him in the old country, you know. He's got it in his head now that the town, and the neighbors are responsible for the water in his cellar.

"You can't tell him anything. He's got some goddom lawyer up to the house takin' pictures of the grounds and the streets and the like o' that, measurin' here and there. Those lawyers will take the shirt off his back, you know. Of course he can't get hold of all his

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money, the boys have kind of got a control 5 over that, but he still owns a little land and a few of his houses. The lawyers will get what they can.

“He had a fight with that German lad that lives next door to him not long ago. Hit the lad over the head with his cane, the old deevil. He was tellin' me aboot it afterwards and he says, 'I felt as vigorous as a young mon.' He'll be fightin' and hollerin' at somebody with his last breath. The doctor, very likely, or whoever else is handy.”